

This is a guide for adult U.S. residents (if you have younger ones with you, there is information here for the whole lot)...going to play in the Grand Pacific Open next year.. mainly from the greater Seattle area. I hope to answer some questions you might have had, and inspire you to strongly consider attending. Costs stated here reflect 2018 pricing. I'll use \$US for US currency, and \$C for Canadian currency. At this time \$1C = \$.80US approximately. You have a year to get ready for the best tournament of the year in WA, OR, ID, or BC... and spend Friday, April 19 to Monday, April 22 of the Easter weekend at the Hotel Grand Pacific in Victoria, BC, Canada.

You are visiting another country. You must have a U.S. passport. Not many people obtain a passport just to go to a tourney, but if you have been thinking about traveling outside the country to other destinations, here is one nearby reason to spend the money and time to get yours. It probably takes about a month to get one, and it is good for ten years.

The tourney is rated by the CFC, and in the Open section by FIDE also, so you need a CFC membership, explained in their registration details. It is not a big cost, and you might want to go to the Keres Memorial tourney or another BC event in the near future where it would be useful also. Most U.S. players purchase a tournament membership (good only for one tournament) for a bargain \$16C. Most entry fees range from \$80C to \$140C depending on when you register, and whether you play up a section. The lowest rating section starts at \$60C.

The organizers provide beautiful chess sets, boards, and clocks, so you don't have to bring any equipment, thus lightening your load while traveling..

From Seattle: by passenger-only ferry

Get to the Victoria Clipper Terminal at the downtown Seattle waterfront by about 7am with departure at 8am. It is the easiest way, and you'll enjoy a fairly comfortable cruise taking about 150 minutes. You'll probably want to eat a breakfast on board. Very reasonably priced at around \$10US.

Then go through customs, and you arrive at the inner harbor of Victoria almost right at the hotel, maybe five minutes to walk with your luggage. Check into your hotel room right around noon. Freshen up a bit, and you will be ready to explore some of Victoria. The first round is roughly six hours away.

Cost for the Victoria Clipper: advance purchase \$135US for a round trip. If you can't get to the downtown Seattle waterfront terminal by bus, or hire, there is parking in a related garage as a Victoria Clipper guest, a short distance away for \$10US per day, so a total of \$40US.

From Seattle: by air

Use Kenmore Air to go from Lake Union in Seattle or Lake Washington in Kenmore to Inner Harbor Victoria in 45 minutes or so, if you can afford it. A seaplane flight has a certain wow factor. Check-in time is shorter, and their flight schedule gives you even more flexibility. The Victoria terminal is 0.4 miles from the hotel.

Any route which brings your car to the hotel in Victoria will have a daily parking fee of \$18C, or \$54C to \$72C total, but then you will have a car to explore more of the surrounding sights and cities. Traffic is light in Victoria and that is a treat in itself.

From Seattle: by car

The drive to Port Angeles from Seattle takes about three hours.

And ferry the car from Port Angeles:

Go to the Black Ball Line Coho ferry terminal to line up for the Victoria sailing. This ferry sails right into the inner harbor and arrives so that after going through customs you are just five minutes walking from the hotel, but you can drive the few blocks and check-in, then park your car in the garage. The ferry cost begins at about \$165US round trip for car, driver, and one passenger, plus \$16US for an online reservation. The ferry crossing is 90 minutes, and you have to be in line at the terminal some 60 minutes early, which would make for a really long trip on one day from Seattle, so you are likely to use this only if you want to spend more time on Vancouver Island. The special departure times from Port Angeles over the Easter weekend are at 8:20am, 12:45pm, and 5:15pm.

And walk-on from Port Angeles:

For a foot passenger, the round trip price is a real bargain. Around \$37US per person. You can arrive 20 to 30 minutes before sailing. Whatever way or time you get to Port Angeles,

there is nearby parking for \$10US per day, and then you can embark on the ferry as a foot passenger, avoiding vehicle ferry fees and parking in Victoria. After customs you are just a five minutes walk from the hotel.

To be really thorough, I must give you yet some more car and ferry choices.

From Seattle: by car

And ferry the car from Anacortes:

You can drive to Anacortes, WA, and take a Washington State Ferry to Sidney, BC, which is approximately 17 miles north of Victoria, and then drive to the hotel. Departure is at 8:30am, but you must be in line at least 30 minutes earlier.

Reservations are recommended. Cost of a round trip for vehicle, driver, and passenger is about \$150US. It arrives at 11:10am and then you must go through customs. Again, the hotel parking fee is \$18C per day. This route requires the least driving from north of Seattle, and may be described as a mini-cruise through the San Juan Islands. The return schedule of 12:05pm only, does not match well with the tourney's Monday playing schedule, so maybe just going one way for half price, and then taking BC Ferries as described below to return on Monday after the last round will work better, or you might play the last round, explore more of Victoria and return by WSF from Sidney to Anacortes on Tuesday. Reservations recommended.

And walk-on from Anacortes:

I have learned that you can leave your car in Anacortes at several parking lots near the ferry terminal, but I do not know the rates or security. The round trip passenger only fare is

\$40US, a very nice price. Again the departure is 8:30am, and arrival 11:10am. Then when you get to Sidney, there are buses to downtown Victoria, and vice versa. The bus fare is \$2.50C. If you do not bring your car onto the ferry, the returning departure at 12:05pm from Sidney to Anacortes will require either a zero-point bye for the last round, or another night in Victoria. I'd vote for another night.

From Seattle: by car

And ferry the car from Tsawwassen, BC

Another possibility is to drive across the border going through customs while in your car and continue to Tsawwassen, BC, and take a British Columbia Ferry to Swartz Bay, about 20 miles north of Victoria, and then drive to the hotel. Round trip cost for vehicle, driver, and passenger is about \$180C. Don't forget the hotel parking fee of \$18C per day. The BC ferry has some advantages over the others; sailing times are more frequent (every hour or two depending on the season from 9am to 9pm). The crossing time is 95 minutes.

Anyone living north of Seattle will have to closely examine these last two routes for suitability to their schedule and interests.

And finally, if you are in some other part of the state, with a nearby airport such as Spokane, you could consider flying to the Victoria, BC international airport, and then busing to the hotel. Start by searching Alaska Air for fares and schedules.

So now that you have arrived at the hotel. I hope you found another chess playing roommate to share the hotel cost which is the same for single or double occupancy.

Hotel Grand Pacific ..GPO super special room rate \$109 CAN + tax per night which becomes approximately \$390 CAN = \$315US total, so \$160US per person. Book early. There will be a limited number of rooms at this rate.

Hotel Grand Pacific is deluxe and may seem expensive, but it has some great options that you could use to lower costs. For example: Early dinner special beginning at 4:30pm which works well for players with the evening rounds for the GPO on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday beginning at 6pm. Probable cost approx \$25C or \$75C total = \$60US.

The typical room has a coffee maker, and a small cooler, so you can buy breakfast/lunch fruits and snacks to lower costs from two grocery stores that are less than six blocks away.

Hotel Grand Pacific has an excellent physical fitness center and pool. It actually serves some locals as a athletic center for cost. Many hotels have fitness centers that are really lacking in their equipment. Not here. You get to use it for free while staying. A terrific bargain.

There are other attractive hotels nearby, and Airbnb opportunities. Use Hotel Grand Pacific or go to other restaurants and pubs for other meals and drinks, apart from my lower cost suggestions.

Victoria is the provincial capital for British Columbia and has a population of about 90,000. The greater municipal areas bring the total population to about four times as much. Victoria is a

walking, and bus riding town. An all day bus pass is \$5C. The playing schedule allows you time to explore the city Friday afternoon, and early Saturday and Sunday mornings. Tourist guide booklets and online sources will help you find your points of interest.

The playing schedule also gives you a chance to meet, and maybe make friends with your Canadian opponents. There is a free blitz tourney Saturday night, and after all main events are completed the prize and awards ceremony takes place on Monday at about 2:30pm.

If you've come by the Victoria Clipper, the return is at 5pm. If you are taking the Black Ball Line Coho ferry, the return over the Easter weekend is at 10:30am, 3pm, and 7:30pm. Make sure that you follow procedures about going through pre-boarding in advance of these times. Your boats are once again just steps and minutes away.

The rounds start on time. Pairings are posted and available online early. The organizers offer door prizes to encourage players to be present at the board for the start of each round. It works. Clever, these guys.

Monday is a holiday for government workers in Canada, so it might appear to be a lazy day. I think Canadians make Easter weekend a very relaxing holiday time.

Weather is much like Seattle..This year.. no rain ...and the temperature reached low to mid 50's... though they like to use Celsius. There is a good likelihood that the weather will be warmer next year because of the later calendar date

If you are a family of chess players and lovers, this event is a bargain, and is not as exhausting as other events. They offer an entry fee discount of \$30C for the second and additional members of the same immediate family. Rounds likely last no more than four hours. The time control for games uses increments. There are four sections now, so your opponents will not have a wide range of ratings.

Seems to me you've been missing out on a great experience unless you've been to a previous GPO. And what better way to encourage BC players to come to NW USCF events than to tell them in person after your games. Become a NW chess ambassador and enjoy yourself in a great city and grand hotel at the same time.

How does such an attractive tourney happen? Through the work of many volunteers, and the leadership and organizational skills of several chess players who wanted to have such arrangements when they played elsewhere, so they built an event in their hometown. And after many good outcomes over a dozen years they have a format, rules and procedures that make the event run better each year. victoriachess.com are the people to contact for more information.

Prices and schedules may change over the year. You may trust this review or guide. It is primarily my research and opinion with some help from one of the organizers, Paul Leblanc, and another friend, but verify, and go by what you

learn as you book your arrangements. I hope to see you there.